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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000013

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SUBJECT: CRACKS APPEAR IN STATE OF LAW COALITION

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Divisions are appearing within the State of Law coalition just weeks after the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) projected its overwhelming victory in Basra's provincial election (reftel). According to REO contacts, the seemingly solid "Maliki" bloc suffers from internal fighting triggered by debate over the appointment of a new governor. Arguments have evidently divided the coalition along party lines - Da'wa Islamic, Da'wa Tanzim and "Independents." Several new Provincial Council (PC) members are working to exploit these divisions and muster enough support to elect a non-Da'wa governor. Members of the State of Law coalition have been silent on the issue. End summary.

#### State of Law Infighting

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¶2. (C) In a meeting on February 26, new PC member Shiekh Amir al-Fayez (Justice and Unity Gathering) told the REO that the State of Law coalition was breaking down as a result of internal disagreements over the selection of Basra's next governor. Fayez said he had observed "intense" fighting among the coalition's member parties during an unofficial meeting of new PC members on February 20. According to Fayez, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki summoned all 20 of the coalition's new PC members to Baghdad on February 24 in an attempt to resolve the internal disputes.

#### Maliki Retracts First Choice for Governor

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¶3. (C) In a separate meeting at the REO on February 26, Basra cleric and businessman Sayyid Abdul Ali al-Musawi confirmed Fayez's report, adding that disagreements within the State of Law coalition erupted when Maliki's Da'wa Islamic Party presented new PC member Dr. Chaltag Abud as its choice for governor. According to Musawi, the choice was resisted vehemently by the coalition's remaining two parties, Da'wa Tanzim (i.e. Da'wa Iraq) and the "Independents," whose members consider Chaltag "too weak" to govern. Musawi also said the two parties resented the dominance of Maliki's party, which has just seven of the coalition's 20 PC seats. Attempting a compromise, Musawi added that Maliki's party has since retracted Dr. Chaltag as its gubernatorial choice in favor of Deputy Minister of Health Amer al-Husay.

#### A Splintered Coalition?

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14. (C) According to Fayez, many opposition supporters believe the parties within State of Law may abandon a unified coalition approach in selecting a governor. This could potentially lead to the selection of a non-Da'wa governor, as any one of the three individual parties could flip the PC balance of power by voting with the opposition. Fayez said that several new PC members are actively working to divide the coalition. Some of them, he pointed out, are refusing to address State of Law as a coalition and insist on talking to its members according to their individual parties.

15. (C) During a meeting on February 25, Walid Kaytan of Ayad Allawi's Iraqi National List (INL) confirmed that he was one of several new PC members working to break up State of Law. While Kaytan would not reveal his strategy, Fayez told REO that INL is seeking to form an "opposition block," which would force the selection of a non-State-of-Law governor. Fayez expressed his doubts over the success of a unified opposition, however, noting that members from the ISCI-led "Shahid al-Mihrab" coalition and the Sadrist Tayar al-Ahrar list did not attend the February 24 opposition meeting. Kaytan believes the opposition would unify around the appropriate gubernatorial candidate, however, and is advocating former governor Hassan al-Rasheed (ISCI/Badr). Although Kaytan admitted he didn't particularly care for Rasheed, he said Rasheed possessed all the necessary qualities to earn the opposition's support: He was capable of governing; he was a member of the largest opposition bloc and, most importantly, he was not from State of Law.

Da'wa Not Talking  
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16. (C) State of Law coalition members have been notably silent on the governor question. During a March 1 meeting at the REO, new PC members Jabar Amin and Mustafa Atia (both Da'wa Tanzim) denied intra-coalition fighting, but would not discuss any details of the selection process. They did make it clear,

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however, that it was State of Law's decision and that they had no intention of consulting with other PC members. Basra Fadhilah leader Dr. Jamal Abd al-Zahra confirmed to REO on March 2 that State of Law had not discussed the issue with anyone outside the coalition.

17. (C) Comment: The tone and conversation of the REO's February 3 meeting with State of Law members Chaltag and Dheyaa (reftel) contrasted sharply with the reluctance of Jabar Amin and Mustafa Atia to speak on March 1. This silence, combined with multiple reports of discord from outside observers, makes clear there are problems within the coalition. While Maliki has apparently taken steps to control the problem, his efforts may not be welcomed by the two non-Maliki parties, which hold 13 of the coalition's 20 seats. The previous Provincial Council faced a similar situation, when the ISCI-led Basra Islamic List coalition held approximately half the seats in the province but could not agree on a governor. That time, Fadhilah, with just 12 seats, formed an opposition bloc and successfully installed Mohammed Wa'eli. End comment.  
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